

## **Summary of the NELAC Federal Partners Teleconference September 24, 1996**

The Federal Partners of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) convened by teleconference on September 24, 1996, at 9:30 am. The meeting was led by Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC director. *The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the prepared agenda:*

1. Continued discussion on any issues regarding the current NELAC Standards,
2. Identifying and discussing accreditation programs in other agencies,
3. Discussing next steps.

A list of action items is provided in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

### **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

To begin the teleconference, Ms. Mourrain asked for comments from the group on the standards as revised at the NELAC Second Annual Meeting, held in July 1996. She cited the need raised by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for reconsideration of radiological testing as an example of possible concerns. In this context, it was noted that several Federal groups are in the MARLAB group and are considering this issue.

It was noted that the NELAC accrediting authority chapter of the Standards is being extensively rewritten by the Accrediting Authority Committee. It was agreed that the rewritten chapter would be shared with this group when it is ready for wide review.

### **FEDERAL AGENCIES AS ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES**

Ms. Mourrain asked whether any members of this group anticipated that any Federal agencies would elect to become NELAC accrediting authorities. She noted that this is important for budgeting considerations as the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) is developed. The general reaction was that Federal agencies would simply require NELAP accreditation of laboratories with whom they did business. This is perceived to simplify matters, since reciprocity is a keystone of NELAP. While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operate laboratory accreditation programs, these programs are presently for food products only; the desire to harmonize accreditation requirements was reiterated.

The issue of "States' rights" was raised as a concern that eventually must be resolved. However, the major desire voiced by several participants was the need for reciprocity.

The Department of Energy (DOE) is still in the process of evaluating possible alternatives for

accrediting laboratories that perform analyses under their auspices. The possibility exists that State accreditations should satisfy their needs.

## **INSPECTION OF FEDERAL LABORATORIES**

Ms. Mourrain noted that accreditation of a State by NELAP, as presently envisioned, would include on-site inspection of the principal laboratory of the State as part of the overall accreditation of the State. She asked if it would be desirable to have the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) inspect Federal laboratories. Currently, Federal laboratories are inspected by the States or in some cases are not performing any analyses under EPA jurisdiction.

## **HARMONIZATION OF ACCREDITATION PROGRAMS**

Since there are several known accreditation programs, the desire to ensure harmonization of requirements and standards was voiced. Ms. Maureen Brittenberg has developed a list of Federal accreditation programs; Mr. Jim Cigler will provide copies to Mr. Ted Coopwood for distribution to this group. The General Accounting Office's (GAO's) 1989 report on Laboratory Accreditation (GAO/RCED 89-102) was also mentioned as a possible useful reference for this group. It will be ordered and distributed to the group.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next teleconference of this group will be scheduled in approximately six weeks.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**NELAC Federal Partners Teleconference**  
**September 24, 1996**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
<b>Jim Cigler</b> will supply copies of Maureen Brittenberg's list of Federal accreditation programs to Ted Coopwood for distribution.	
<b>Gene Tatsch</b> will obtain copies of the GAO report on laboratory accreditation for distribution to this group.	

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS  
NELAC Federal Partners Teleconference  
September 24, 1996**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Telephone Numbers</b>
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